

Oxford Scholars 2020-2024

According to Hennesy Saunders 2024 alumni, if Newman could be described in three words, it would be educational, powerful, and purposeful. Cardinal Newman is a school based on the well-being of their students and community of support. As a community, Newman will always rise to the challenge and unite to overcome adversity or hardships. This was needed once Covid-19 hit in 2019 and lasted into 2020. Analyzing the period 2020-2024 of Cardinal Newman's growth, they had to combat the virus and the 2017 fires. These four years had to be a period of physical and cultural regrowth in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and devastating fires reflecting Newman's community-driven effort to reshape our school and rise from the ashes.

Twenty-twenty was a virtual year of learning, yet the teachers tried effortlessly to encourage their students to stay engaged. "I was given take-home experiments for my freshman year biology class that helped to enhance the topics I was learning and still make it interesting even while learning over Zoom" (Riley Mictosh, 2024 Alumni). This is one of many examples of how teachers fought through adversity and unforeseen challenges. Newman is proud of the quality of education and support given to students. Teachers put themselves first at most schools, while the students are put first at Newman. Teachers are always willing to work with students and guide them to be their best. All five alumni I interviewed stated how they felt the teachers taught them to learn, not just for a grade.

In 2021, teachers were accommodating in catching the students up on the material and information missed during distance learning. They didn't even have a classroom to teach in, just portables. Despite the lack of a classroom, the teachers decorated them to make it feel like a

welcoming environment to learn and engage in classroom activities. While Covid was a limitation in academic progression, the teachers worked tirelessly to ensure academic success.

Newman is a powerful community that demonstrates strength and unity. While the 2024 alumni lost a year to COVID-19, they got to experience a period of growth. The physical growth of the school can be seen with our new buildings. The most impressive is the Student Life Center, which has innovative technology that allows students to have every resource possible to succeed. The many faculty and staff available in the SLC allow students to stay in touch with their advisors to guarantee success. It also has a socialization area where students eat lunch and can decompress after a class. An extremely social spot is the Campus Ministry room, where Ms. Rodnick welcomes students to take a break from the busyness of high school. The Student Life Center has become a place of gathering and socializing, allowing community connections to flourish.

This reclaiming of immense pride held within the Cardinal Newman student can be seen through a culture shift. “Having been built up from the ashes, our small community found it a priority to take care of one another, nurture our spirits, and grow closer together under a common hardship” (Henese Saunders, 2024 alumni). Reshaping our school's identity post-tragedy has been a significant focus of the period. Three teachers, including Mrs. Eggleston, spearheaded this cultural development, according to Jordan Cunningham, 2024 alumni. He explained how they reshaped the leadership at Newman, specifically through ASB. Seeing a lack of school pride after the pandemic, Mrs. Eggleston aimed to bring back the spirit she experienced at Ursuline. She claimed that people used to wear their Ursuline swag with pride and confidence. That sense of belonging was lost for some time post-fire. She reshaped how ASB was run and presented itself

in the community. She encourages students to lead by example and value their character. This is a representation of her time at Ursuline.

Alumni make Cardinal Newman such a special, well-knit community. Alumni like Mrs. Eggleston are why Newman has been able to hold onto their pride and purposeful attitude for 60 years. Newman has a purpose other than just academics and school spirit. Once a cardinal, always a cardinal. Cardinal4Life was an Instagram account created by an alumni in 2023. This account's sole purpose is to connect all the alums and Cardinal Newman students to one another. People invest in the Newman community for the lifelong friendships and connections gained.

Community is often seen in sports, specifically women's soccer. John Gilson has been the girl's soccer coach for over 15 years. He, along with many other coaches at Newman, created a family. Sofia Lightner said, "Joining the women's soccer team was the best decision I ever made at Newman. The team made me feel like I was always part of something and a family. They will forever be my family." While this is seen primarily in Women's Soccer, it is prevalent in many other sports. Newman's goal is to join people together to gain bonds that will last a lifetime. Not everyone may have had the new building or the SLC, but every student who has attended Cardinal Newman has risen through prayer and studies to join together.

From 2020 to 2024, Newman experienced a period of growth marked by resilience and community effort. Overcoming disasters like the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2017 fires, the school has emerged stronger, paving the way for a positive identity. Between the tireless efforts of the teachers over distance learning and the rebuilding of our school, Newman has shown that it is more than academics. Connected under the Catholic tradition, Newman nurtures the whole person's mind, body, and soul. The cultural rebirth, driven by the need to refind our school's identity after tragedy highlights the school's intense pride and power of community. Cardinal

Newman is a school where bonds are formed, and it has lasted for the past four years of high school. As Newman continues to flourish and grow stronger, the key foundations of the well-being of the student and the pride of being a Cardinal will remain everlasting.